

## Tuesday Topics May 2, 2023

President Davis introduced our two speakers, former LWVTSC Board member and Top City Mental Health Advocate Dennis Bosley and Susan Wallace, an advocate for people with mental health issues and an USPS retiree.

With May being Mental Health Awareness month, Tuesday Topics focused on this local, state and national issue. Dennis explained the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) consists of many programs. Dennis first learned about Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) at a meeting in Overland Park. Dennis knew immediately that Topeka needed such a program. Upon returning to Topeka, Dennis approached law enforcement leaders in Topeka, including Bill Cochran, all of whom embraced the idea. CIT became a reality in Topeka! There are 40 CITs in Kansas and Shawnee County is now designated an Innovator County.

Co-responders work with CIT and are licensed social workers from Valeo. Topeka was the first city in Kansas to have co-responders. There are now 40 in the state.

Stormont Vail funded a \$750,000 motor home that houses three clinics and mobile access for the homeless. It is part of the mobile local access program. Dennis is currently working on Women in Corrections – how they are treated. He said, “Hats off to Brian Cole,” Director for Shawnee County Department of Corrections, for his help in this new endeavor.

Susan said NAMI is a grass-roots organization founded by parents. She described the family-to-family classes that include sessions on diagnosis and medication, treatment and therapy, conversations to de-escalate in the family, empathy, and self-care. Classes also include sharing stories, which help families realize they are not alone. The next class will be on September 11 from 6-8:30pm at Countryside United Methodist Church.

Susan then spoke about a possible additional program that is close to her heart, Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT). This will require a judge who is willing to add to his/her workload. The judge would meet with AOT and an individual treatment plan would be written to include a Peer Specialist. In New York where AOT has been implemented, hospitalization is down 41%, incarceration is down 87% and violent behavior is down 47%.

A Mental Health Court has been established in the Topeka Municipal Court for misdemeanor offenders. Work is in progress to establish a Mental Health Court in District Court

Thank you to Dennis and Susan for their unwavering work on behalf of our community!